

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

MAY 9, 1860—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. DAVIS made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Joint Resolution S. 25.]

*The Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia, to whom was referred the joint resolution of the Senate "manifesting the sense of Congress towards the officers and seamen of the vessels and others engaged in the rescue of the officers and soldiers of the army, the passengers, and the officers and crew of the steamship San Francisco, from perishing with the wreck of that vessel," having had the same under consideration, report:*

This joint resolution is accompanied by numerous signed memorials from merchants and others in the commercial cities, "praying Congress to grant some proper testimonial to the officers and crews of the ships Three Bells and Antarctic, and of the bark Kilby, for their humane, self-sacrificing, and heroic conduct in rescuing the passengers, officers, and crew of the steamer San Francisco."

When this subject was before Congress in January, 1854, it was referred to a joint committee of the two houses, who reported, after a laborious investigation of the case, the joint resolution of February 5, 1854, (with report No. 85,) which passed the Senate, but failed for want of time in the House. The history of the case is as follows:

The steamship San Francisco, the property of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company of New York, was chartered by the War Department to convey United States troops and military stores to California, via Cape Horn.

She left New York on the 22d December, 1853, having on board, in addition to the crew of the vessel, the third regiment of United States artillery and several passengers, among whom was a number of women and children; in all about eight hundred souls.

On the night of the 23d, she encountered a severe storm, which rendered her wholly unmanageable. On the morning of the 24th, she was struck by a violent wave, which shattered her quarter-deck, her hurricane-deck, and carried away her upper saloon, and all the officers, soldiers, and passengers who had taken shelter in it from the storm, amounting to about two hundred in number. The vessel was very seriously damaged by this terrible shock, and continued afterwards to leak so badly that it required the utmost efforts of all on board to keep

her afloat. On the same day, and soon after this dreadful occurrence, she spoke the brig Napoleon, of Portland. The captain of this brig promised to lie by her, but was separated from her during the night. The next day, the 25th, the San Francisco spoke the brig Maria, of Liverpool. The captain of the Maria also promised to lie by her, but the night separated the vessels.

On the 27th, the bark Kilby, of Boston, Captain Low, hove in sight. This vessel had suffered much in the storm that wrecked the San Francisco. She was short of provisions and water, and leaking badly, yet her captain promised to stand by the wreck, which promise he faithfully kept through the night. The next day, the 28th, upwards of one hundred persons, men, women, and children, were transferred from the San Francisco to the Kilby. This operation was arrested by the increase of the gale at night, but it was intended to be resumed the next day, untill all should be removed from the wreck; the storm, however, increasing with the night, the vessels were unavoidably separated. The Kilby cruised in search of the wreck for some time, until her own crippled and disabled condition compelled her to abandon the search and provide for her own safety. It was full time, as she afterwards encountered great difficulties in getting safely into port.

On the 31st, the ship Three Bells, of Glasgow, Captain Creighton, came in sight, and, on learning the condition of the passengers and crew, promised to lie by them and succor them at all hazards. This vessel had suffered severely from the storm, was short of provisions and water, and leaked so badly that her condition was scarcely less critical than that of the San Francisco; but her gallant commander faithfully kept his promise. At the most imminent risk to his vessel, he lay by the wreck for several days of storm and danger, having for this purpose to perform the most skillful and perilous maneuvers, passing frequently under the lee of the wreck to cheer and encourage those on board.

On the 3d of January, 1854, the ship Antarctic, bound for Liverpool, fell in with the San Francisco, and generously tendered assistance and succor to those on board. On the 4th and 5th, all the surviving passengers, not previously transferred to the Kilby, were removed on board the Three Bells and Antarctic. On the 6th, all the officers and crew were taken from the wreck, Captain Watkins being the last man who abandoned the ill-fated vessel.

The bark Kilby, after struggling with the winds and waves for fourteen days, finally reached within ten miles of New York, when a storm arose and she was again driven to sea. The next day she fell in with the ship Lucy Thompson, Captain Pendleton, of New York, whose commander, upon learning her perilous and distressed condition, kindly volunteered to take the passengers on board, they having subsisted on parched corn for the five previous days. This removal was immediately effected, and the Lucy Thompson supplied the Kilby with provisions and water, of which she stood greatly in need. The Lucy Thompson brought these suffering passengers in safety to New York.

The Kilby was afterwards found in a helpless condition, and was towed into Boston harbor by the steamer City of New York, Captain Matthews.

The Three Bells arrived safely in New York; the Antarctic at Liverpool.

The committee are deeply impressed with the generous conduct of these gallant men, who aided in rescuing our distressed countrymen from the wreck of the San Francisco.

The commanders of the Three Bells, Kilby, and Antarctic deserve the grateful acknowledgments of the country for their humanity and intrepidity. Captains Pendleton and Matthews deserve favorable notice for the timely aid furnished by them.

Thanks and praise are especially due to Captain Creighton, of the Three Bells, who, for six tempestuous days and nights, in a spirit of disinterested humanity, and at the imminent peril of himself and crew, stood by the sinking steamer until her gallant commander, who remained the last man on board, abandoned the doomed and deserted vessel.

The committee are persuaded that these humane and noble services were rendered without any hope or expectation of pecuniary compensation; and they are for that very reason, in the judgment of the committee, entitled to grateful acknowledgement. They therefore report the joint resolution back to the Senate, and recommend its passage.

